

Bad Influence by **gracefraser**

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Summary:

That boy is such a bad influence on a girl like you, Joyce.

Bad Influence

Author's Note:

My first post on AO3! I hope you like it, I'm still trying to figure it out!

Joyce, you know that James Hopper is not a boy you should be around, don't you?

Pep-rallies were never either of their scenes. Something about the popular kids being glorified got under their skin during the mandatory assembly. It was because the annual back-to-school pep-rally that Joyce Horowitz decided to make the dreadful event slightly more bearable. The plan was set; skip study hall last period with Jim Hopper and get intoxicated in the woods behind the gymnasium. Not drunk beyond recognition, just enough to make the pep-rally seem somewhat enjoyable.

Skipping study hall was quite the normal occurrence. Usually, the pair would share cigarettes under the steps or drive around Hawkins making small-talk. But their plans for this particular activity had never been done. They'd both had far too many drinks before, but never in the daylight, and never with these strong intentions.

"Am I to assume you have the drinks, Horowitz?" Jim asked sarcastically as he met Joyce at their usual spot under the steps. She rolled her eyes and turned her back to him, revealing the bottles of cheap whiskey and wine in her backpack. "I'm impressed. You got those from your dad's stash?"

"Obviously. Where else would I get them? Now let's go, you know we'll get caught if we stand here for too long." Joyce grabbed his hand and eagerly pulled him along towards the woods.

They walked in comfortable silence around the backside of Hawkins High School. The weather was almost too perfect for the time of year. It hadn't started to get cooler outside despite the mid-September date. Joyce only wore a light cardigan over her white tee. Hopper admired her sense of fashion or lack thereof. The girls their age in Hawkins wouldn't be caught dead in the outfits she wore. They always went for form-fitting dresses or miniskirts with outlandish colors. Joyce preferred to keep it simple and comfortable with t-shirts and jeans, and she never cared what people said about it.

Before they had even reached a safe spot hidden away in the woods, Joyce had a bottle of whiskey to her lips. The temptation had been driving her to insanity the entire day. Every time she unzipped her bag to take a book out, her eyes would lust at the alcohol she was harboring.

"Jesus Joyce you mind sharing?" Hopper asked. Joyce shook her head and took another sip, the bottle now nearly empty. It had only been a quarter of the way full when she started, but the girl could really down her alcohol. Jim rolled his eyes and tried to grab it from her, but to no avail. Joyce finished it off before he could get his hands on it. "You're gonna regret that."

"Says who? I feel fantastic." She smiled, passing him the empty bottle sardonically. "Don't worry you'll get some."

"But more for you, right?" Hopper asked. The pair entered the woods now, a few browned leaves crunching under their feet.

"Always," Joyce replied. "This is perfect." Her eyes landed on a fallen tree. It was almost as if it had been placed there by mother nature herself for them. She sat and grabbed the remaining bottles from her bag. She laid them out in front of her before explaining how the sharing situation was going to go. "I have dibs on the wine, it's from Italy or some shit. We get mostly equal custody of the rest of the whiskey but I want the vodka as well."

"Joyce you can't have wine, whiskey, and vodka. You'll pass out." He said. The deal was to get tipsy, not blackout drunk.

"Wanna bet?" Joyce asked. She reached for a bottle with her eyes

closed, secretly hoping she had hands on the vodka. "I can hold my liquor, Jim." She opened her eyes and smiled to herself when she saw the bottle of her dreams in her hand. "Oh look, it's the vodka." She teased. Hopper snatched the whiskey and twisted it open before Joyce could even react.

"You know, everyone tends to think I'm the bad influence on you. Your parents, our teachers. But I'm starting to think it's the other way around." He said before taking a slow, savory sip of the whiskey. Joyce let out a laugh, nearly spitting out the vodka she had in her mouth. "Look at you! You're already intoxicated."

"Am not! You just- you made me laugh. Not fair." She slipped out. He knew she was already tipsy. She never stuttered on her words so when she did, it was a telltale sign.

They sat quietly for the next few minutes, sipping their respective bottles. Joyce loved being rebellious every once in a while. People had always called her a goodie-two-shoes, saying she would never do anything to hurt her reputation. She let it get to her, resulting in befriending Jim in middle school. Despite it being out of pure peer pressure, it was still one of her favorite decisions she had ever made.

They were polar opposites, Jim Hopper and Joyce Horowitz. He brought her into his world slowly, careful that she didn't slip over any edges. The first step was getting her to smoke her first cigarette. Everything after that was purely her idea. Jim hated parties but somehow, about three months into their friendship, he found himself steadying Joyce every second to keep her upright after drinking far too much of whatever was in that punch bowl. He ended up staying the night after that party, holding her exhausted body as she slept. A part of him suspected it was her first time getting wasted. His instincts were entirely true, as she woke up the second the sun rose complaining about the light. The countless times she drank after that got easier for her. She built up her tolerance, but whiskey and vodka were never a good mix with her.

"Hey, Hop?" Joyce whispered in a low voice. He prepared himself for whatever drunk monologue was ahead of him before turning to her. "How'd we end up here? After one cigarette you completely turned me. A year ago I never would've snuck my parents' liquor out of the

house. How'd you captivate me like you did?"

"I guess you just needed me. The old Joyce didn't know how to have a good time." He joked. A smile crept on Joyce's face, her dark eyes lighting up. "Switch?" He asked, holding out the whiskey for her to take. They traded the contents in their hands before Joyce sighed and curled her small frame up to his. "What's this about?"

"I like when you hold me. You always do when I'm drunk, just getting a head start." She answered. She took a sip of the whiskey and traded it out for the luxurious wine on the ground. Truth is it was far from a head start. She was already gone and it wasn't hard to tell. Every word she spoke became slightly more slurred. "I think I'm getting there, actually. The thought of watching cheerleaders doesn't make me want to die." She said, giggling at her own words.

"Oh, you're definitely there, Joyce." Hopper chuckled, giving her shoulder a squeeze. He could never get enough of her laugh. It was as intoxicating as the vodka in his grasp.

"My name's Joyce, I'm sixteen, and I live in Hawkins, Indiana. See, not drunk yet!" She argued.

"Hmm, I call bullshit. That sounds rehearsed. What's your address if you're so smart?" Hopper asked. He waited for an answer, but it didn't come. Only a defeated sigh escaped Joyce's lips. "Will you even be able to walk back to the gym at this point?" Joyce scoffed at his question and escaped his grip, attempting to stand up. She found somewhat of a balance, but it wasn't destined to last long. Her feet stumbled underneath her, and she fell into Hopper's arms.

"My hero." She managed to say before erupting in a fit of laughter. "Maybe, maybe I am a little-"

"Completely." Hopper corrected her, his hands still holding her waist. "You are completely wasted already."

"You ever thought of kissing me, Jim Hopper?" She asked. Hopper was a bit taken back at her sudden change of topic, especially one this out of the ordinary. "Have you? Are you right now? I am incredibly close to your lips after all. One inch closer and we'd be lip-

locked." She rambled. Her words were messy, completely random, but very seductive. Even in her drunken state, she knew exactly what she was doing.

"I'd never take advantage of you, you know that Joyce." Hopper responded. Still, he didn't let her go, he didn't move away from her. They may not have been lip-locked, but their eyes were fixed on one another's. Blue and brown, staring so deeply that they could've sworn they could see each other's souls.

"What if I wanted to kiss you?" Joyce said in a quiet voice. If anyone else was around, he'd be the only one to hear it. Her hand moved up to his face, cupping his cheek ever so gently. This was uncharted territory. They had fallen asleep in each other's arms before, they'd hugged an uncountable amount of times. But this newfound lust was brand new with the price tag still on it. "Well? What if I want-" She was cut off abruptly by his lips gently meeting hers. The taste of the red wine was fresh on her, and it felt so good.

"Not until now." He said as he pulled away from her. Not far, Joyce's soft lips were still ghosting his.

"Hmm?" She hummed in response, sliding her hand from his cheek around to the back of his neck.

"Never thought about kissing you until now." He said. He brushed a few strands of her hair off her face and tucked them behind her ear. The touch made Joyce shiver, despite being a sweaty, drunken mess.

"And?" Joyce asked.

"I kind of want to do it again." He replied, closing the gap between them.